



16 August 2021

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Introduction

The genesis of this strategy and proposal is to mitigate the potential loss of weeks during a COVID interruption and the impacts on the Integrity of Competition (*Promotion and Relegation*) and The League's finances.

The proposal, considerations and consequences are complex, but the navigation of the risks and threats are as equally complex.

It is our collective belief that we would be bereft of our responsibility to not present the risks and alternative considerations to our Member Clubs to consider in the current dynamic.

It is believed a reduction in team numbers to 8 teams per division offers significant relief to ongoing risks in 2022.

We are no wiser to being able to establish a risk profile against being disrupted than not. SA Health, SAPOL and the State Government cannot commit to either scenario. Anecdotal information on relief from the threat of Lockdowns offers a range of Christmas 2021 to Christmas 2026. That range is too wide for The League to risk its interests.

However, we can draw on recent experiences from 2020 and 2021 that demand The League have a clearer pathway in the event there is further disruption.

The League Executive's position is to provide a platform for collaboration that provides choice by member clubs.

Executive Summary

Based on a number of assumptions, both informal and formal, advice from SA Health & SAPoL and the potential financial risk of not being able to host finals, the League is proposing three options to mitigate ongoing risks.

Known considerations are:

Option 1 – A baseline of a 14 Round competition (8 Team Competition)

Option 2 – A baseline of a 14 Round competition + 3 Rounds if no interruptions (8 Team Competition)

Option 3 – To retain the status Quo

The requirement to retain integrity and financial stability underpin this proposal and are at the heart of what the League is attempting to achieve.

Options 1 or 2 are The League Executive's Recommendations though remain open to further considerations during the Consultation period and as such, reserves the right to redact their recommendation should circumstances allow.

Put simply, if we experience a lockdown we then simply cut the affected games out of the programme completely. That is, they are not played later and no points are awarded to anyone.

The League is accepting of a possibility of Member Clubs electing Option 3 though ask clubs to underwrite the financial risk in the event The League's financial performance is affected as a result if there is no room for The League to make adjustments as the dynamic of the day dictates.

The consultation period will begin today, Monday 16th August and remain open until Close of Business Friday 1st October 2021.

Assumptions

1. Advice from SA Health is that there remains a high likelihood of further Lockdowns to navigate in 2022
2. That any lockdown is a minimum 2 Saturdays and loss of matches.
3. That football will not be afforded calendar space in cricket seasons
4. That local Councils whilst originally empathetic (2020) have suggested football should prepare for contingencies so as not to affect venue maintenance schedules between football and cricket seasons.
5. That Home and Away is a high priority due to the nature of the AdFL Competition and the need to satisfy Promotion and Relegation.
6. That the last date (Saturday) to host Grand Finals is the 3rd Saturday in September
7. That a Premier is awarded following a final series of any form identified.
8. That The League protects the hosting of Grand Finals given the volume of income relative to the League's financial performance.
 - a. League Calls have not increased but decreased 20% since 2013.
9. Reviewed at the completion of Season 2022 to return to 10 Team structures
 - a. Be open to same in 2023 if required
10. The Adelaide Footy League establishes integrity of competition through the promotion and relegation of Member Clubs on yearly basis.
 - a. The competition is currently one season out of sync to that principle with no promotion and or relegation at the completion of season 2020 outside of individual club collaboration.
11. The League forecasts an income of circa \$220,000 / \$250,000 generated from ticket sales/finals revenue via the hosting of Grand Finals alone.
 - a. There should be no ambiguity that this income offsets the need for Member Clubs to subsidize that expense to underwrite the operations of The League.

Structure / Options

The primary focus is to provide flexibility in-season due to the potential loss of weeks due to Lockdown by establishing 8 team competitions to which Options 1 and 2 is addressed.

The initial grading will rank each team in order of their finishing position at the completion of Season 2021.

E.g the 9th Team in Div 1 is ranked 9th, the minor Premier in Div 2 is ranked 11th etc and allow flexibility to change rankings based on local knowledge.

Option 1 – A baseline of a 14 round competition + Traditional top 5 (4 weeks) though subject to change and a willingness to adopt other finals flatforms.

- Assessing competition integrity can be established in tranches of 7, 10 & 14

Option 2 – If un-interrupted, a fixture can be extended to 17 Rounds which can be reduced if required as well as a 4 week Finals series which is subject to change i.e. Lockdowns and adopt a previously used format for an 8 Team AdFL competition in 2019 as described

- * The Top 4 teams in each division would play each other once in Rounds 15, 16 & 17
 - No team can lose its position in the top 4, only their rank within it.
- * The Bottom 4 Teams would play each other once in Rounds 15, 16 & 17
 - Continue to play for 5th position if applicable
- * Assessing competition integrity can be established in tranches of 7, 10, 14 or 17 rounds
 - The top 5 play off in the finals over 4 weeks unless weeks are lost due to suspension of season.

Option 3 – Clubs elect to maintain the current and prescribed formula but clubs should place significant thought to the possibility that without transparency or pre-approved methodology to determine the non-allocation of premiership points and Match percentage, that through the loss of weeks and an inability to replace matches, clubs may be relegated unfairly or more broadly, may miss finals or double chances that a top 5 offers due to an uneven draw.

Put simply, if we experience a lockdown we then simply cut the affected games out of the programme completely. That is, they are not played later and no points are awarded to anyone.

Note: The 8 team per division proposal offered is not immune from the above risks however a shortened or easily divided season offers flexibility to remain agile and adapt the season to outside influences if required.

The Road Map to Normality

The League is committed to returning to 10 team divisions once the identified risks have been diluted.

At the time the League is able to revert to 10 team Divisions, it would be assumed.

- all Grand Finalists are promoted
- 2021 7th and 8th Relegated, 2022 Grand Finalists, 2021 Grand Finalists considered for promotion
- Priority could be assessed by ranking of either the 7th and 8th placed teams the year before and or aggregate of W/L in the previous years of reduced competition and or invitation to assume promotion based on League Assessment

Women's Footy

There would be no need to offer any consideration to the women's competition structures given they are already 6 or 8 team divisions and 14 or 15 rounds and would remain as is and as per recommendations to men's divisions. If anything, the lack of any disruption to their competition structures outside of the most recent Government enforced Lockdowns offers a live example of the application of either recommendation of Option 1 or 2.

Consultation Period

The Consultation Period will be open from Monday 16th August until Friday 1st October.

This period will also offer an opportunity for The League to collate external information that may influence this outcome i.e. Threats of lockdown, vaccination rates, advice from Government authorities both Federal and State otherwise not available.

The League will publish feedback either for or against the motion in weekly communications for member clubs to dissect and arrive at an agreed position as per the prescribed formula via the approved Rules/Regulation and Constitution.

This Document, particularly Pros and Cons and FAQ/Answers will be updated on a weekly basis.

The Motion

It is suggested The Motion will be offered in two tranches.

1. That season 2022 be regraded to 8 team divisions.

Note: the last Division to be addressed independently and determined by team numbers

Should that motion be ratified, further discussion and a motion to determine whether Option 1 or 2 is the preferred model.

Option 1 – 14 Rounds + Final 5*

Option 2 – 14 (+ 3) Rounds + Final 5*

*Subject to season disruption

Should the motion be defeated, Club engagement on the preferred methodology to determine competition Promotion and Relegation in the absence of a true Home and Away season (Washouts) will be required.

The League is accepting of a possibility of Member Clubs electing Option 3 though ask clubs to underwrite the financial risk in the event The League's financial performance is affected as a result.

Pros and Cons

To be added/deleted or even swapped with Club input

	CONS	PROS
		Increased ability to protect integrity of competition
	Shortened season	Shortened season
	Should a 14 match season be preferred, - there are 4 weeks less income	Should a 14 match season be preferred, - there is 4 weeks less expenses i.e. match payments Umpire & medical - Choice remains to schedule 17 matches under Option 2
	Paid Players may leave for other 18 round competitions GSFL – 18 matches over 18 matches with top 5 SFL – 16 matches over 18 Rounds with top 5 BLGFA - 16 matches over 18 matches with top 5 APFL – 14 Matches over 14 Rounds with Top 4	Greater certainty and flexibility to contingencies - Less risk to League finances - Less risk to competition integrity
	Spend more time at home with husband, wife, Girlfriend or Boyfriend	Spend more time at home with husband, wife, Girlfriend or Boyfriend
	Players could demand higher payments for shorter season	Extend volunteer Shelf life after a tough 18 months - Encourage Volunteer recruitment
		Increase player retention
		Short term relief to Volunteer fatigue

Examples of Compromised Integrity (Option 3)

Below are as close to live examples of a team missing out on playing finals if the remaining rounds are not played as currently planned as we can find.

If the season was cut short at the end of Round 16, Eastern Park were in 4th position and Lockleys were in 5th.

Round 16										
Pos	Team	P	W	L	D	B	F	A	%	PTS
1	Pooraka	14	10	4	0	2	1559	917	62.96	20
2	Kenilworth	15	10	5	0	1	1407	1099	56.15	20
3	Colonel Light Gardens	14	10	4	0	2	1389	1118	55.40	20
4	Eastern Park	14	9	4	1	2	1506	1128	57.18	19
5	Lockleys	14	9	5	0	2	1321	967	57.74	18
6	Salisbury	14	8	6	0	2	1140	973	53.95	16
7	Hectorville	14	5	8	1	2	991	1138	46.55	11
8	West Croydon	14	2	12	0	2	972	1882	34.06	4
9	Fitzroy	15	0	15	0	1	845	1908	30.69	0

If the season had continued on for the full 18 rounds the final 4 would have could have been different if we assume the same result as in their previous encounter.

Round 17			
Fitzroy	71	Eastern Park	144
West Croydon	75	Lockleys	95

Round 18			
Eastern Park	76	Pooraka	107
Lockleys	106	Kenilworth	53

Round 18										
Pos	Team	P	W	L	D	B	F	A	%	PTS
1	Pooraka	16	12	4	0	2	1744	1068	62.02%	24
2	Colonel Light Gardens	16	12	4	0	2	1566	1290	54.83%	24
3	Kenilworth	16	10	6	0	2	1460	1205	54.78%	20
4	Lockleys	16	11	5	0	2	1522	1095	58.16%	22
5	Eastern Park	16	10	5	1	2	1726	1306	56.93%	21
6	Salisbury	16	8	8	0	2	1313	1153	53.24%	16
7	Hectorville	16	6	9	1	2	1167	1301	47.29%	13
8	West Croydon	16	2	14	0	2	1135	2079	35.31%	4
9	Fitzroy	16	0	16	0	2	916	2052	30.86%	0

Based on an albeit prediction of results from the 1st round encounter, Lockleys would have had two wins and Eastern Park one win in turn ensuring Lockleys gained the 4th spot and Home Final in a normal year and Eastern Park miss out.

Below is an example of a team suffering Relegation if the remaining rounds are not played and based on 1st Round.

If the season was cut short at the end of Round 16 Seaton Ramblers would be relegated.

Round 16										
Pos	Team	P	W	L	D	B	F	A	%	PTS
1	Glenunga	16	15	1	0	0	1233	815	60.21	30
2	PHOS Camden	16	11	5	0	0	1197	1104	52.02	22
3	Old Ignatians	16	10	6	0	0	1311	1117	54.00	20
4	Sacred Heart OC	16	10	6	0	0	1136	1084	51.17	20
5	Broadview	16	7	8	1	0	1201	1253	48.94	15
6	Henley	16	7	8	1	0	1074	1163	48.01	15
7	Salisbury North	16	6	10	0	0	1241	1240	50.02	12
8	Athelstone	16	5	11	0	0	1028	1203	46.08	10
9	Seaton Ramblers	16	4	12	0	0	1098	1279	46.19	8
10	Scotch OC	16	4	12	0	0	1025	1286	44.35	8

Whereas if the season had continued on for the full 18 rounds there would have been different outcome if we assume the same result as in their previous encounter.

Round 17			
Seaton Ramblers	92	Scotch OC	40
Athelstone	57	Sacred Heart OC	106

Round 18			
Henley	85	Seaton Ramblers	67
Scotch OC	69	Sacred Heart OC	78
Athelstone	72	Salisbury North	77

Round 18

Pos	Team	P	W	L	D	B	F	A	%	PTS
1	Glenunga	18	17	1	0	0	1400	963	59.25%	34
2	Sacred Heart OC	18	13	5	0	0	1380	1163	54.27%	26
3	PHOS Camden	18	12	5	0	0	1340	1275	51.24%	24
4	Old Ignatians	18	11	7	0	0	1473	1243	54.23%	22
5	Henley	18	8	9	1	0	1209	1285	48.48%	17
6	Salisbury North	18	7	11	0	0	1380	1371	50.16%	14
7	Broadview	18	6	11	1	0	1287	1470	46.68%	13
8	Seaton Ramblers	18	5	12	0	0	1261	1400	47.39%	10
9	Athelstone	18	5	13	0	0	1171	1415	45.28%	10
10	Scotch OC	18	4	14	0	0	1135	1475	43.49%	8

It could be assumed, Seaton would have won one match and Athelstone none, meaning that Seaton avoided relegation due to the better percentage.

Below is an example of a team missing out on playing finals (Top 5) if the remaining rounds are not played

If the season was cut short at the end of Round 16 Mitchell Park were in 5th position and Houghton Districts were in 6th

Pos	Team	P	W	L	D	B	F	A	%	PTS
1	Central United	14	13	1	0	2	1426	693	67.3	26
2	Greenacres	14	11	3	0	2	1406	870	61.78	22
3	Brahma Lodge	14	11	3	0	2	1403	964	59.27	22
4	Adelaide Lutheran	14	7	7	0	2	1186	1102	51.84	14
5	Mitchell Park	15	7	8	0	1	1320	1237	51.62	14
6	Houghton Districts	15	7	8	0	1	1154	1243	48.14	14
7	Flinders University	14	5	9	0	2	1093	1132	49.12	10
8	Hackham	14	2	12	0	2	846	1391	37.82	4
9	O'Sullivan Beach Lonsdale	14	1	13	0	2	630	1832	25.59	2

Whereas if the season had continued on for the full 18 rounds the final 5 may have been different if Mitchell Park loses to the higher place Brahma Lodge (they actually won by 4 points in their previous encounter)

Round 17			
Hackham	57	Houghton Districts	93
Bye		Mitchell Park	

Round 18			
Brahma Lodge	84	Mitchell Park	80
Houghton Districts		Bye	

Pos	Team	P	W	L	D	B	F	A	%	PTS
1	Central United	16	15	1	0	2	1624	779	67.58%	30
2	Greenacres	16	13	3	0	2	1559	962	61.84%	26
3	Brahma Lodge	16	13	3	0	2	1619	1136	58.77%	26
4	Adelaide Lutheran	16	8	8	0	2	1333	1272	51.17%	16
5	Houghton Districts	16	8	8	0	2	1247	1300	48.96%	16
6	Mitchell Park	16	7	9	0	2	1400	1321	51.45%	14
7	Flinders University	16	5	11	0	2	1177	1309	47.35%	10
8	Hackham	16	2	14	0	2	958	1546	38.26%	4
9	O'Sullivan Beach Lonsdale	16	1	15	0	2	780	2072	27.35%	2

Houghton would have had one win and Mitchell Park no wins dictating Houghton gained the 5th spot and Mitchell Park missed out.

Questions and Answers

Question: Could a club still be promoted from 2021 to 2022 ?

Answer: If a higher ranked club has identified their own risks and wish to be relegated, the League will endorse.

Question: What if 2022 becomes 2023 and 2024 ?

Answer: Then the original caution will be validated.

Question: What if we go 14 rounds, are delayed or disrupted and we still run short of weeks to have Top 5

Answer: We adapt any of the templates supplied based on the time we have to work in to complete the season by the 3rd Saturday in September just as we have in 2020 and 2021.

Question: Why couldn't we have the option of finals being played later as was the case in 2020?

Answer: 2020 was a one off because the season didn't commence until July. But we can't put ourselves ahead of other sports, not to mention expecting any more of our club volunteers. It would be selfish to even consider conducting finals any later than the week before the AFL Grand Final. And it's not just the logistics of clubrooms and ovals transitioning to cricket season but many of our participants are entitled to be afforded that same transition to their summer sporting activities.

In short - Our finals will be finished by the 3rd Saturday in September and without question.

Question: Assuming there was 17 rounds, are you suggesting B and C grade would also play the other teams in their respective halves of their competition.

Answer: In principle, No.

- B and C grade would follow their A grades.
- Unfortunately this question falls into the category of not having a plausible solution for every problem unless of course clubs were happy to send B and C grades to different grounds based on their ladder positions.
- C Grade could be content with a 14 round competition regardless of whether there is a wish to extend the season for A and B grade Divisions

Question: If we stay at 8 teams in 2023 because of Lockdowns, how do we establish promotion and relegation

Answer: If we are still considering 8 team divisions in 2023, we have bigger issues than promotion and relegation.

- But as long as we are comfortable the integrity of competition has been established, either 2 up and 2 down or if clubs elect another formula i.e. 1 up and 1 down

Question: Will the League and the clubs who could vote this in look stupid if we have no COVID issues in 2022?

Answer: No, No and No. A definition of madness is to do the same thing hoping to get a different outcome. We will have had two years to get our heads around this. I'd be more concerned looking stupid if we don't do anything to mitigate the risk.

But to go COVID free in 2022 will be a victory for South Australia in general regardless of the AdFL season structure. But we could also look stupid if we ignored the risk and ended up falling short of completing a season. The alternative model provides the flexibility to conduct a fair and meaningful season whether that be 17, 14, 10 or even 7 rounds in the worst-case scenario. Even a single lockdown of 2 weeks should still enable us to play the 17-game season with a normal finals series. Any more Lockdowns and we work through where we land with the lesser round options.

The traditional model for the AdFL season is an early April commencement with Grand Finals played across the two (sometimes three) Saturdays preceding the AFL Grand Final, which is usually the last Saturday in September. This of course also takes into account the need for clubrooms, ovals and many of our club officials, volunteers and participants to transition in and out of summer sports. These are sports that are entitled to run their own seasons from early October to late March as they always have.

However, the traditional model gives the League very little room to move in the event of community sport being cancelled for a week or more during the April to September period. It is not as simple for our League to cancel and not re-schedule rounds due to our first priority of providing an equitable fixture for the integrity of promotion and relegation. Prior to 2020, any situation that would see the cancellation of games was far-fetched but a global pandemic has made this a reality as we have already experienced in 2020 and 2021.

What occurred in 2020 with the late start and late finish to the 9 round season plus 4 weeks of finals was supported by councils and summer sport bodies to enable us to conduct a season of some substance and competition integrity. But 2020 was a one-off and the League (and we suspect all or most clubs) don't want a repeat of what just unfolded for the 2021 season, which forced us to compromise our finals series across all Men's divisions. Some would even argue that 2020 was a better outcome by at least being able to conduct a proper finals series.

Question: If we manage to play a 17 game minor round how does it actually work?

Answer: The League fixtures the first 14 rounds with each team playing each other twice – home and away. The ladder at the end of Round 14 determines who makes the top 4 and the bottom 4 with the incentive of one of those bottom 4 still making the finals in 5th place.

The fixture for the next 3 weeks is then determined based on the top 4 playing each other once and the bottom 4 playing each over once. The ladder continues where it left off after Round 14 and ladder positions can change within each group of 4 teams but one key condition is that no team in the 5 to 8 group can finish any higher than 5th even if their win / loss (or % if relevant) ends up superior than any of the teams in the top 4. This model was used for the 8 team Division 7 in 2019 and was well received. In effect, Rounds 1 to 14 are the Minor Round and - using an Olympics terminology - Round 15 to 17 are the Classification Rounds.

Question: It seems unfair that some clubs will get 9 home games and others just the 8 home games?

Answer: It's a reasonable point but under this model clubs just need to work on having 7 home games (14 Rounds) and anything beyond that is a bonus whether it be another 2 or 1 at Home. In a normal season clubs have to deal with things such as the distance of travel for the visitors, weather and Crows and Power matches at Adelaide Oval on a Saturday. These can all have an impact on "fairness" even with every club having an equal amount of games at home. The benefit of the three Classification Rounds whether you have 1 or 2 home games is that the proposed should provide even contests and interest in all games rather than what can sometimes unfold in the tail end of the season.

Finals Fixture Templates

The templates listed can be assumed dependent on the weeks impacted

- Top 3 (2 weeks)

1 Preliminary Final	Grand Final
1 2v3 PF1	Minor Premier v W1

- McIntyre Top 4 (2 Weeks)

2 Preliminary Final	Grand Final
1 2v3 PF1	W2 v W1
2 1 v 4 PF2	

- Traditional Top 4 (3 Weeks)

2 Semi Finals	Preliminary Final	Grand Final
1 3v4 SF1	3 L2vW1 PF	4 W2vW3 GF
2 1v2 SF2		

- McIntyre Top 5 (3 weeks)

2 Semi Finals	2 Preliminary Finals	Grand Final
1 2v3 SF2	3 1vL1 PF1	W3vW4 GF
2 4v5 SF1	4 W1vW2 PF2	

- Traditional Top 5 (4 Weeks)

2 Elim/Qual Finals	2 Semi	Preliminary Final	Grand Final
1 2v3 QF	3 1vW1 SF2	5 L3vW4 PF	6 W3vW4 GF
2 4v5 EF	4 L1vW2 SF1		